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Youth working together for peace

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# Youth in a globalising world



*Afterwards I will pour out my spirit on everyone  
 your sons and daughters will proclaim my message  
 your old men will have dreams and your young men will see visions.*  
 Joel 2:28

**Y**outh is a backbone of any progressing society. The role of young people is significant in the sustainable development of our countries. Without acknowledging the contributions of young people, it is impossible to realise the dream of a peaceful world. However, like the rest of social segments, youth is also faced with numerous challenges.

In Asia, globalisation is characterised by economic interdependence driven by cross-border capital movement, rapid technology transfer and communication flows. Globalisation has forced us to relate to each other in ways previously unthinkable. Along with all of us, rapidly growing globalisation has hugely impacted young people. One aspect of globalisation is a positive one. In the comfort of our living rooms we watch happenings from Jakarta, Manila, Tokyo and rest of the world live on our television. Our children no longer sit passively in front of their screens, rather their fingers connect them to the world with a click of a mouse. They live in a faster communication age in much profound ways than the generations before them.

However, the other side of the coin has a different face. It is apparent how Asian youth has ended up being victim of a consumerist globalisation, where the pressure of competitive free market economy has affected their potential and creativity in negative ways. In this situation, youth in the ecumenical movement is striving for the realisation of God's

reign on earth. Young people are engaged in dialogue about negative impact of globalisation by addressing issues of poverty, social injustice and ecology.

It is often said that youth participation in the ecumenical movement is decreasing these days. Many times we hear that ecumenical movement is dying and has little hope for the future. It is an alarming observation, as the future of ecumenical movement lies in the visions of youth. It is essential to identify the root causes behind the lack of interest among youth in joining the ecumenical movement. The youth movements can respond to the cries of people in churches and societies in significant ways. We have to realise that youth has a great potential to revitalise the ecumenical movement with their fresh perspectives and insights.

Amidst these challenges youth needs inspirations from the leaders of the past as well. They need to learn lessons from the journeys of their elders in following Christ and serving the people. This could be one way young people can equip themselves to respond to the issues and challenges in churches. At the same time present leadership has to be a good example in supporting the youth movements.

His Eminence George Cardinal Pell, Archbishop of Sydney, delivered an ice-breaking homily at the Opening Mass to the youth gathering of the World Youth Day celebration 2008 saying, "We envision a world where all young people - regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religion, class, gender or other differences are encouraged and empowered to be more pro-active and serve as advocates for peace, justice and unity. With this our old men will dream, our young men shall see visions and ecumenical movement gives 'hope' in the globalising world."

—Prawate Khid-arn

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# Revitalising ecumenical movement in Asia

**W**hy do we need to revitalise the Ecumenical Movement in Asia today? The word revitalise has several synonyms: revive, renew, restore, strengthen. These words can mean that there is something lacking, something wrong or something that needs serious attention about the ecumenical movement today. Do we need to revitalise the ecumenical movement because it is dying, old-fashioned, weak?

Speaking free from a full manuscript but only with a print-out of her power point slides, Kaythi Min Din, youth representative on CCA's General Committee, reflected on the challenges facing the ecumenical movement in Asia at the CCA-WCC joint consultation held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 1-3 September 2008.

She cited some challenges faced by the Asian Ecumenical Movement: globalisation (free flow of people, culture, money, etc.), individualism (advancement of information technology, surviving in a highly competitive world); nationalism (to protect own identity); denominationalism (membership campaign rather than true mission); NGO-oriented mind (driven by proposals and projects); and overestimation of development.

She quoted Genesis 11:1-9, which speaks of a people building a city, made of bricks, with a tower reaching to the heaven in order to live together and make a name for themselves. But God came down, confused their language and scattered them all over the earth.

*Now the whole earth had one language and a common speech. As men moved eastward, they found in plan in Shinar and settled there. They said to each other "come, let's make brick and bake them thoroughly". They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, let's us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heaven, so that we may*

*make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.*

*But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. The Lord said "if as one people speaking the same language they have began to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible to them . "Come let's us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other. So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building city. That is why it was call Babel.*

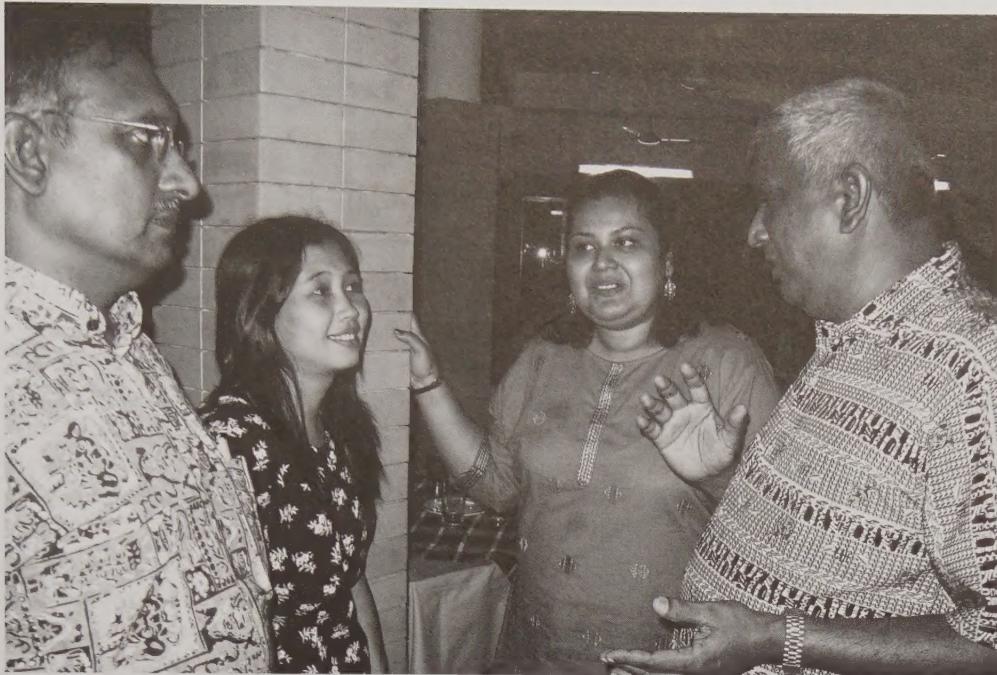
She compared this city-building project with today's phenomenon of globalisation with its desire for a mono-culture, based on profit-oriented capitalism, and which is linked with the building of an e-tower. The essential infrastructure of all this is exploitation and monopoly.

The desire to reach the heaven means no limit to power building or use of power. The desire to make a name means to create own dignity even at the expense of others. In such a situation, she said, the poor and powerless are prohibited from having access to equal opportunity. Indigenous people are kept from having their social space.

But God came down and said: "Come let us go down and confuse their language, so they will not understand each other." Why doesn't God come down and destroy the city/tower and people in present time? What do we want God to do?

Kaythi Min Din suggested another way to look at strengthening the ecumenical movement through the words *construct, renovate and transform*. She quoted Jeremiah 1:10: "See today I appoint you over nation and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant."

She also quoted Isaiah 19:23-25: "In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to



Kaythi Min Din (second from the left) with CCA staff

Assyria. The Assyrians will go to the Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The Lord almighty will bless them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance."

Who will be the *third party* today and what is the responsibility of the third party? Kaythi challenged the group of Asian representatives on the WCC Central Committee and the members of the CCA General Committee to commit themselves as the third party to transform the dividing wall so that it will become a bridge of authentic fellowship. The third party needs proper awareness of the human-made city and tower with its evil infrastructure. The third party needs to find alternative way to distribute the knowledge of God for peace and secure society. The third party needs to foster inclusiveness for all people who are trying to build the family of God based on love, justice, and equality.

*For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which*

*he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household.*

She quoted Ephesians 2:14-19 to show the strategy of Christ Jesus in transforming the dividing wall and the divided people. The wall that divides must be transformed into a bridge for people to cross over. Jesus' strategy (as in Mark 9:38-40) is inclusive - affirming of the different gifts and abilities, for power sharing, not competitive but complementary.

The task of revitalising the Asian Ecumenical movement involves the struggle to bring about solidarity among peoples in the face of the many ecumenical challenges of the contemporary period. This calls for growing in faith, being able to have a new understanding of the diverse world, abandoning arrogance, absolutization, and self-centeredness, and embracing the different faiths. Ecumenism is not something to build up people's pride but for people to come in penitence as we reclaim our calling to serve the world without any hidden agenda.

Summarized by Hope S. Antone

# Dialogue on mission

FMU consultation explores dimensions of holistic mission amidst Asian plurality

**I**n cooperation with United Theological College (UTC) and National Council of Churches in India (NCCI), CCA's Faith, Mission and Unity (FMU) organised a sub-regional consultation-dialogue on "Holistic Mission in Context of Asian Plurality". The consultation took place at the United Theological College in Bangalore, India from 29 March - 2 April 2008.

Rev. Dr Sungkook Park, Joint Executive Secretary for FMU, along with participants of the consultation also took part in various local events of UTC. He conveyed greetings on behalf of CCA at the valedictory act.

The first day of the consultation started with a Sunday worship service at St. Marks Cathedral, where Bishop Dhirendra Kumar Sahu, General Secretary of NCCI, gave a sermon.

The consultation began with a presentation by Rev. Dr Abraham K.C. on "Mission

as Celebration of Life". He reflected on Matthew 28:16-20 and pointed out biblical texts to be referred to in context of mission. He also made references to Luke 4:16-21 "Nazareth Manifesto", Mark 6:7-13 "Mission of the Twelve", Matthew 5:13-16 "Salt of the Earth and the Light of the World" and John 17:1-19 "Unity and Sending". Dr Abraham attempted to combine the concept of "mission" and "celebration of life" in order to understand the community building and sharing. This was a "re-routing" presentation, which moved the dialogue towards finding alternatives and developing new ways of understanding mission.

Another challenging presentation was made by Dr Chgrangthan Chhungi, who gave an overview of marginalisation in Asia. She presented case studies and shared a status report on the given theme. She urged the participants to redefine mission in context of "countless horrifying experiences that hound



Participants of FMU consultation in Bangalore

everyday existence of the marginalised groups". Seeking for new ways of understanding mission and doing mission, Dr Chhungi referred to the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism Conference 2005 in Athens. Agreeing with the concept "Healing and Reconciling" she critiqued the term "in between-ness" in the preparatory document of the conference. "Mission as a 'go-between' the parties sounds like a departure from the earlier position of being in solidarity," she said. According to the context of the marginalised people in Asia, Dr Chhungi stressed that it will be impossible for the marginalised and victimised people to take part in God's Mission, unless their health is recovered and restored by the wrongdoers. At this point she referred to biblical stories of 'Jacob and Esau (Genesis 25:19-33.20) and Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 37-45), where the process of forgiveness and redemption is visible. Dr Chhungi stressed that the wrongdoers have to fulfil their part in order to give "health" to the victims. If true *Mission Dei* is to take place, holistic healing is required for the wounded hearts of the victims.

The second day of consultation began with a meditative devotion led by Rev. Dr Evangeline Anderson-Rajikumar. Later Rev. Dr Christopher Duraisingh delivered a presentation emphasising that "mission is not a function of the church, but church has to function in the ongoing mission of God". By reminding participants of the concept of *Mission Dei*, he stated, "Mission is posture of the way of being a Church". In context of the theme Dr Duraisingh emphasised, "Pluralism is the cornerstone of God's universal design".

The discussions following Dr Duraisingh's presentation focused on Christianity in Asia (the regions of non-Christian culture) and whether the missionaries brought "light" and "salvation" to those regions. Often it has been argued that introduction to the Gospel was the light and life for the old and "dark" ages of some regions. To have received the "light" of real life is an appreciative expression. Nevertheless, particularly in Asian context we have to give consideration to deep-rooted traditions, such as the relation with ancestors. Being told to have lived in the "darkness" through all the years, before Jesus and the

Gospel was introduced, causes controversy among non-Christians as well as Christians themselves. Regarding this, participants welcomed Dr Duraisingh's words, that "God has been active in Asia before the coming of missionaries".

The last keynote presentation was delivered by Rev. Dr Rienzie Perera addressing "Christian Identity in the Context of Asian Plurality". The question he followed throughout his presentation was "How do we define Christian Identity?" He shared reflections on the legacies of Christianity from the past. He emphasised that Christianity was very much attached to "missionary, militancy and merchandise", as well as "westernisation" and "capitalistic bias". Mission in this sense threatens rather than being a "life-giving" mission. It breaks up communities, alienates people and fuel crusades. However, mission is to re-enact the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, while the identity must be rooted in Jesus Christ. Dr Perera picked up two sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist as "powerful symbolic actions for sharing our life and commitment to the world".

Along with keynote presentations, there were numerous inputs from the discussions and group workshops. Dealing with mission, the consultation included reports and reflections from missionary receiving and sending countries. Delegates from national council of churches in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh and India shared perspectives on holistic mission as missionary receiving countries and churches. Missionaries from South Korea and Taiwan shared their experiences of mission work. The presentations from each NCC delegate shared that the theme of the consultation stresses the need of exploring several dimensions of mission together. The national councils from South Asia also emphasised that mission should be based on a partnership relation, which can be inherited by the next generation.

—Sungkook PARK

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It will be impossible for the marginalised people to take part in God's Mission, unless their health is recovered and restored by the wrongdoers

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# Faith in action

## CCA contributes an Asian voice to the International Aids Conference in Mexico

**T**he International AIDS Conference (IAC) was held in Mexico from 3-8 August 2008. The event was preceded by the 3-day, 3rd Ecumenical Pre-Conference - the earlier ones were held in Bangkok in 2004 and Toronto in 2006 - organised by the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA), and World Council of Churches (WCC). 480 delegates from seventy-seven countries with the theme "Faith in Action, Now" participated.

In 2006 as CCA's HIV/AIDS Program Consultant, I was part of the Toronto Pre-Conference Advisory Committee. This year I was nominated as member of Global Ecumenical Team (GET) along with Ms Elijah Fung from Hong Kong (as member Advisory Committee) and Dr Vijay Aruldas from India (as moderator for panel Presentations). Dr Erlinda Senturias from Philippines, Dr Sunita Abraham from India, also members of CCA Strategic Task Force on AIDS and Rev. Sanan Wutti from Christian AIDS Ministry of Thailand represented Asian faith based organisations. The three-day event was a place for the Christian community to share best practices and learning from past strategies, before being thrown into the "hippodrome of the Americas" with over 22,000 delegates participating in the International AIDS Conference, titled "AIDS 2008".

Along with EAA Pre-Conference, similar events took place, eg., Church World Service's pre-conference on Intravenous Drug Users (IVDUs), and meeting of Positive Networks. The Youth pre-conference was the most visible event called "Mexico Youth Force". The program went beyond the basics of AIDS and addressed themes such as "Sex, Drugs and HIV?" Among other cross cutting issues being addressed were MSM (Men having sex with men), and LGBT (Lesbians, Gays,

Bisexuals and Transgenders). This culminated in a massive march against homophobia, where a speaker aptly remarked, "Till we invent an effective vaccine against HIV, we should create a social vaccine".

Prateek Suman, the youthful chairperson of Global Steering Committee of World AIDS Campaign, expressed concern on youth faced with resistance from elders and status quoists. He said, "A-B-C (Abstinence, Being faithful to your partner, Condoms) is not enough, we need the whole alphabet." Ms Gabriella Ross Quirega from Bolivia, Rev. Christo Greyling and Rev. J.P. Heath from South Africa and Rev. Jim Matarazzo Jr. from USA were at their charismatic best. The ANARELA - which is an African network of religious leaders living with or personally affected by HIV - commemorated its 5th Anniversary. On the occasion it launched its International Network of Religious Leaders living with HIV and AIDS (INERALA) with promise to focus more on Asia and set up an office in Nagpur, India.

Following the Toronto conference in 2006, I wrote about the "Africa-centricity" in the papers presented in the plenaries and workshops. The same issue popped up again in Mexico. It makes one wonder if Asia is being ignored due to the majority of western worker's - and donors' - focus on the AIDS issue in Africa? Is the AIDS pandemic in Asia not as alarming as other regions? Are distances and costs the factors that hinder appropriate highlighting of AIDS issue in Asia? The answers do relate to the fact that the most ignored region in both Toronto and Mexico conferences was Asia.

Though there were sessions with focus on Asia in Mexico conference, yet they concluded without any concrete results. Among Asian voices Ms Sujatha Samarkoon from Sri Lanka

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Religious leaders have come a long way from their original state of denial and judgments about HIV/AIDS issue

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spoke about gender related inequalities, human rights violations and forced HIV detection tests in her country. The issues being discussed included the problems of ethnic groups such as the Shan of Myanmar, who are discriminated for being an ethnic minority with racial differences and suppression of National AIDS Council in Papua, New Guinea in 2007.

As CCA's Consultant for AIDS program, and representative of Asian Interfaith Network on HIV and AIDS (AINA), I can say that Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) and religious leaders have come a long way from

their original state of denial and judgments about the HIV/AIDS issue. The fight against the epidemic has now become significant in the domain of interfaith work. One example of this is the impact created by CCA's brainchild, AINA, in Mexico. Its chairperson, the venerable monk Phra Maha Boonchuay from Thailand and Dr Asavari Herwadkar, a Hindu from India participated in interfaith events. However, during the IAC the interfaith events also remained mere "sideshows".

Around 300 delegates including Sikhs, Muslims, Jews, Christians and colourful indigenous representatives attended a worship



Paul Jeffrey/EAA

Bishop Mark Hanson, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and president of the Lutheran World Federation, washes the feet of two HIV positive women during the 1 August plenary of the Ecumenical Pre-Conference, held 31 July-2 August in Mexico City, on the eve of the International AIDS Conference. On the right is Herlyn Marja Uiras, of Churches United Against HIV and AIDS in Southern and Eastern Africa. Third from right is Sophie Dilmitis, HIV and AIDS coordinator for the World YWCA. Between the two women is Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda, general secretary of the World YWCA. Hanson's act came as a symbol of repentance for the churches' contribution to stigma and discrimination directed at people living with HIV and AIDS.



Anandi Smith/EAA

service in a Methodist church as a sign of unity. However, it was still a drop in the ocean. Many UN organisations and NGOS acknowledged the faith-based response as compassionate, aware and required in the multipronged strategy to fight HIV/AIDS. Peter Piot of UNAIDS mentioned this to press as well. However the support is yet to be proved by moving beyond the new "mantra" or buzzword of "interfaith". Few outside the EAA's GET know that the plans for a "high level" interfaith meeting of faith leaders during the IAC were scuttled. However, AINACCA team was able to meet with co-chairs of International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific (ICAAP-9) from Indonesia. The Interfaith Pre-Conference in Bali in August 2009 was discussed. The IAC in 2010 was slated to be held in India, but as its venue did not

have an auditorium large enough to seat the expected 25,000 participants, the option then moved to Austria. A little bird in the IAC Committee felt that the 2012 venue will probably be someplace in USA, where it has not been held in two decades, as it is one of sixty-seven nations which imposed restrictions on the entry of HIV positive people. Why? Because during the IAC, USA's president George Bush magnanimously signed a paper which, if passed by Congress, will change the rules and allow entry to HIV positive people. It seems a case of Quid Pro Quo (favour for a favour). Not fair, you say? What else can we expect from a virus that is unjust in how it chooses its "victims" and the unjust responses it evokes among people? Maybe we need to approach the virus from a new angle - that of justice. Perhaps we would then be more satisfied after three decades of working against it than we are now.

At the Pre Conference, Herlyn Ujras, a young woman from Africa told her story of abduction, rape and forcible entry into the world of HIV. Sophie Demetrios, as HIV positive spokes person openly challenged the Church for not helping her and not condemning the stigma and discrimination. Bishop Mark Hanson from Lutheran World Federation (LWF), who lost two sons to AIDS, responded in a manner that echoed in the minds and hearts of all the delegates. There was no dry eye in the hall where he invited both HIV positive women on the stage and publicly washed their feet as a sign of atonement. This can be remembered as the high point of the Pre-Conference.

The same evening a group of religious leaders from the Ecumenical Pre Conference went to the Positive Leadership Summit meeting to show solidarity. They came back with this message from Positive People.

What we want most is simply to be accepted rather than be tolerated:

*Accepted as people living with HIV*

*Accepted as men who have sex with men*

*Accepted as people who use drugs*

*Accepted as people who want families and can be responsible parents*

*Accepted for who we are*

The question now is - can we accept them in our churches and communities?

—Philip Kuruvilla

# Anointing communities

JID responds to the Myanmar cyclone crisis from a church based perspective

**C**yclone Nargis struck Myanmar on 2 May 2008 with winds up to 200kph that swept Ayeyarwady delta region and the country's former capital Yangon. The authorities initially declared Yangon, Ayeyarwady, Bago, Mon and Kayin as disaster areas, and on 6 May revised the statistics by declaring Yangon and Ayeyarwady divisions as the only affected areas. The total population in the declared disaster areas in Yangon and Ayeyarwady divisions is thirteen million (out of estimated population of fifty-three million in Myanmar). Approximately six million people live in Yangon, where the damage was most severe. The extreme winds were accompanied by a sizable storm that destroyed almost 95% of housing in the affected areas. Yangon sustained a direct hit, which de-

stroyed power and communication lines and damaged buildings. Six days following the storm, people remained largely without electricity, clean water and communication means. Many roads in the city, as well as vital roads leading to the delta region, were blocked by floods. The water transport infrastructure in these areas was severely damaged.

The death toll and number of missing people or survivors remain difficult to assess as the numbers of dead kept on increasing after the disaster. As of 5 May the Minister for Foreign Affairs in Myanmar estimated 10,000 people have been killed in Ayeyarwady division alone, with 3,000 people missing. Recently the international media sources cited a total figure of approximately 23,000 dead and 40,000 missing. According to the state



Vinton Memorial Church destroyed after Cyclone Nargis in Yangon

media in Haing Ky Island, 162 people died and nearly 20,000 houses were destroyed, leaving 92,706 homeless. Several hundred thousands are estimated to be without shelter and safe drinking water. An effort to carry out a comprehensive assessment continues to be hindered by the lack of communication and blocked roads.

The Myanmar government announced the establishment of an emergency committee headed by country's prime minister, followed by military and police unit deployments as part of rescue and cleanup operations. The government indicated in a briefing with UN and diplomatic authorities on 5 May, that it is open to international assistance, although it would appear that the assistance envisaged was primarily bilateral, with support going directly to government relief agencies. The government itself pledged approximately five million US dollars for relief.

The fact finding mission personnel from CCA's Justice International Affairs and Development (JID) indicated the acute need for immediate relief increasing every day. How-

ever, due to heavy regimental attitude and nasty resistance to the international NGOs and aid agencies by the present administration, the innocent victims are still at the mercy of the bureaucrats. In addition to this, food and security situation in the country is likely to become more acute. Compounding the delivery of aid has dire logistical constrain, as most of the delta region has not been much accessible, or rather prohibited for outsiders to visit by the officials.

In the present scenario the regime is forcibly clamping down on refugee camps and compelling people to go back to their villages. This intends to show the international community that the Myanmar regime is capable of handling catastrophes and affairs internally, so the outsiders "better stay away". With regard to the prevailing situation, they might have another hidden fear that foreigners entering the country may expose the reality of the disaster and spy on the country's intelligence related issues.

Due to political and economic factors, usually the information about natural disasters and their after-effects falls into the category of either confidential or not accessible to the public in most countries. The situation in Myanmar is no exception. Cyclone Nargis brought devastating consequences to its survivors. The country's socio-economic dimension and policies have suffered and shifted beyond description, with negative impact on the communities. The country's socio-economic issues are classic indicators to analyse the aftermaths suffered by the sur-



Rev. Freddy De Alwis and Rev. Dr Sungkook Park visiting one of the cyclone stricken areas in Myanmar



A community devastated by cyclone in Myanmar

vivors that need to be addressed immediately.

### Challenges to CCA

Following its three day fact finding mission JID was emphatically challenged to equip the local churches and build capacities through "Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness Workshop". The immediate priorities include trauma counselling comprising of "Training of Trainers". The program will be held with an aspect of sustainable development. The training will be followed by a second round of programs with focus on survivor's needs in Myanmar. The initiative aims to uplift the broken and vulnerable people, who are challenged to look beyond the catastrophe and learn to overcome the present fears and aftermaths of the the crisis.

After the three-day fact finding visit to Myanmar held from 9-12 June 2008, JID under the auspices of the Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC), with several

heads of churches in the country. JID represented itself simply as a "church body" and not as an NGO or another relief agency with colossal amount of funds to be dispersed. The general observation was that there are numerous unsearched, untouched and un-reached areas without aid that can be identified as the "Gulf areas" in the cyclone hit five provinces. Many churches were anxiously waiting to receive transitional assistance, temporary shelters, trauma counselling and training of trainers in disaster mitigation. Thus, JID extended cooperation and solidarity at every possible level to the local bodies, who are already engaged in the process of relief and mitigation activities. This also prevents us from becoming parachutes or invaders in the disaster struck nation with "aid syndrome".

—Freddy De Alwis

# Fight against AIDS

Religious leaders join hands to curb the epidemic at "Hindu Leader's Caucus"

**H**IIV/AIDS continues to be a critical test of our faiths and practice. We must recognise that in many instances the gap between religious teachings and practice is huge. The major challenge is how to bridge this gap," said Prawate Khid-arn, CCA's general secretary and advisor of the Asian Interfaith Network on HIV/AIDS (AINA). He was addressing the inaugural session of "Faith in Action", at "Hindu Leaders Caucus" on 1-2 June in Bangalore, India.

Around hundred priests and more than 200 participants, including representatives from UN, National AIDS Control Organization (NACO), state AIDS control groups, members of Indian parliament and NGO workers attended the event. The caucus was an initiative of AINA and a follow up of Colombo

Interfaith pre-conference held in collaboration with UNAIDS in 2007. Fr Philip Kuruvilla, CCA's Consultant for HIV and AIDS was also present. The meeting was the first national Hindu leaders meeting on HIV/AIDS, aimed to build a platform for religious leaders so that they can formulate a coherent strategy and action plan in their fight against HIV/AIDS.

India is estimated to have nearly 3.5 million people living with HIV/AIDS, many of whom face social stigma and discrimination. "The stigma is so strong that women are expelled from houses and children are prevented from going to school," said Denis Broun, UNAIDS country director in India. He urged the faith leaders to use the goodwill they command with India's Hindu majority to generate support for HIV positive people

to live normal lives.

His Holiness Poojya Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, founder of Art of Living International Center in Bangalore, called upon the participants to strengthen their efforts in supporting the cause of HIV/AIDS. He highlighted the significance of youth in society and the need for educating them about the epidemic. He stressed that awareness raising is essential to persuade youth towards



Spiritual reflections at Hindu Leaders' Caucus in India

healthy living to formulate a society free of stigma and discrimination against HIV/AIDS positive people.

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar emphasised keeping the essence of preaching in line with the demands of our times in relation to Hindu dharma. He said, "The problem of HIV/AIDS can only be fought with united efforts from Hindu religious leaders. The wide range of religious leaders all over the world from completely different ideologies and mindsets have all come together for one single purpose—to see a healthy society - an AIDS free society. In this sense it [this event] is very significant. Health is the biggest wealth of a society, if we have no health, we are poor. Religious leaders have a lot of say, and they can do a lot about this."

Dr Prawate Khid-arn also stressed that the pandemic is a challenge for faith groups to put their beliefs into practice. "The challenges posed by HIV/AIDS are far beyond the reach of the government, doctors and counselors. Along with being a medical and social problem, it is also a behavioral and moral issue. Religious and spiritual leaders have the power to change the thoughts of people. Therefore they should use this influence to bring a positive impact on societies," said Dr Khid-arn.

In a statement released at the end of the two-day gathering, the Hindu leaders committed themselves to equip Hindu faith leadership with knowledge and skills necessary to



Dr Prawate Khid-arn addressing the inaugural session of "Faith in Action" in Bangalore

guide their community in reducing HIV infections, and to fight the stigma and discrimination associated with it. The conference formulated a coordinating committee to follow up recommendations and implementation of plan of action.

—Prawate Khid-arn



Hindu Leaders' Caucus brought a huge gathering of religious leaders in Bangalore addressing the issue of HIV/AIDS

# Ecology, economy and accountability

JID addresses crosscutting issues with ecumenical actors in Korea

CA's Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service (JID) in collaboration with National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCK) organised a four-day conference on "Ecology, Economy and Accountability" in South Korea from 13-18 May 2008. Asian ecumenical partners along with activists from NGOs participated in the event. NCCK graciously incurred all the conference expenses and supported this initiative for a timely debate on the theme. Around twenty-seven delegates from eleven countries (India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Korea, Sri Lanka, Australia, Thailand, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Myanmar and New Zealand) participated in the conference. The delegates were stimulated and challenged for

interaction, especially among discussion groups for a sustainable purpose to be fulfilled in the Asian churches. Biblical reflections provided cutting edge fundamentals to break the Asian ecumenical movement's long silence. In addition, the country presentations and visit to the oil spilt coastal area of the Southern Korean Sea exposed the participants to the issue. Further, the action plan formulated on the final day set precedence to a formidable and ecumenical eco-partnership in Asia.

The conference was held at Lee Grand, Beach Hotel, Boryeongsi, Choonganam in South Korea; located in close proximity to the South Korean beach. Although it was a drive of 350 km, the delegates were able to



Participants of the workshop

witness the beautiful landscape and the eco-friendly environment of the countryside. The expertise of the moderators and the practicality of theologians thoroughly enriched the secession. On the third day of the conference, the delegates were exposed to a wonderful field experience, by practically cleaning the rubble kept against the erosion in the coastal line, where the tragic oil spilt incident took place in the Southern Korean Sea.

The conference aimed to create awareness among the present day generation and challenge the ecumenical constituencies to treasure earth as "habitat earth" in order to preserve it for the future generations. The conference gathered key ecumenical people from all walks of life, cultures, creed, race, gender and calibre. The participants together in debate were able to impact and identify "humankind accountable to the creation of God", where they can become promoters of peace on mother earth, which is already groaning.

The ecumenical leaders, ecologists and environmental activists participating in the conference were able to explore and formulate an action plan to strengthen local campaigns to pressurise their own governments, authorities and implement awareness building and advocacy programs at national and regional level. The action plans discussed during the final day of the conference can be measured as one of the significant achievements in terms of theological discourse and group interaction. Finally, the value of good networks and necessity to have strong emphasis on eco-centrism amongst the ecumenical organisations, activism and lobbying with authorities can be measured as a successful accomplishment.

Evaluation forms revealed a level of satis-



### Small group discussions

faction in the areas of content, selection and expertise of resource personal and logistics, although the benefits of some sessions were reduced due to time constraints. The delegates were able to benefit from the conference and enhance learning from the field visit. However, the tangible benefits from the conference can only be attained by the commitment of participants to refine and implement the action plans. JID committed itself to assist the participants in the process.

One of the key focuses of this conference was to persuade Asian ecumenical groups to become more sensitive towards global warming issue and communicate the message of ecology, environment and accountability. The impact from civil societies in creating more dynamic and vigorous response with the global lobbying groups is extremely important. This objective was achieved to a great extent when the country presentations were made and discussed. Furthermore, the request of the delegates to disseminate information pertaining to "global warming and accountability" in the future was significant to show that cohesive purpose of the conference was accomplished.

The participants were diverse in terms of language, seniority, professions and organisations they represented. They included policy

makers, trainers, activists, clergy and field workers who presented positive challenge to the facilitators in discussions.

The exposure visit can be mentioned as a highlight for many as it provided the opportunity of applying the classroom theories in the realities of eco-disasters. The practical lessons were learnt in terms of sensitivity towards vulnerable groups whose livelihood has been destroyed by the disasters. The participants expressed their gratitude for the exposure visit as it inspired and enhanced their learning in many ways.

The theological expositions were also acknowledged by the delegates and indicated in the evaluation sheets. The contributions were highly appreciated beginning from Dr Rienzie Perera from CCA, whose ability of applying deep theological truths in simple forms was inspiring for the participants. Dr M. P. Joseph from Taiwan was also much appreciated for his contributions. This was another way to measure that the conference was able to create theological insight into the eco-

logical debate. The session conducted by Mr Sarath Fernando created deeper insights and understanding of the theme and was highly appreciated by the delegates. Dr Evangeline who shared on "Theology of Accountability in God's Creation" also contributed inspiring reflections on the theme.

Along with the resource people, the administrative back-up provided by NCK was excellent and commendable. Handouts and other materials were produced and circulated within a short period of time. It was recommended that future hosts provide administrative support at similar level.

A follow-up document on "Korean Conference on Ecology, Environment and Accountability" will be published in the future to be used by national councils and church-based organisations as resource material.

—Freddy De Alwis



The participants after taking part in cleaning the coastal line affected by oil spilt in the Southern Korean Sea

# Youth leadership

## MEPP equips young Cambodians to play a pro-active role in the churches

**W**hen Christian youth stands up in unity they hold all the potential to revitalise mission work, bring positive change to communities and glorify the name of God. In this context, youth of Cambodian churches participated in the leadership training program organised by Mekong Ecumenical Partnership Program (MEPP) along with the youth desk of Kampuchea Christian Council (KCC) from 3-5 June 2008 and 1-3 July 2008. Around thirty-three young people from Cambodia participated in this training program.

Through this training MEPP was able to build capacities of youth leadership in the Cambodian churches. The aim of this training was to equip youth to establish self-identity, confidence and new understandings of looking at the world. The young participants

learned skills needed for an inspiring leadership. The training emphasised that a leader must understand and respond to the challenges of changing times and contexts. The participants discussed how youth leadership should respond to the socio-political realities of the churches and communities.

During the training sessions, it was stressed that young people in the church must move together in a positive direction. It was communicated that bringing about a positive change is only possible if young people are able to transform themselves. In discussions the pre-conceived notions about the role of youth in church was challenged. It was stressed that young people should play more pro-active role in the community life and apply their learning trainings in their own contexts.

The Cambodian churches are divided into



Participants of MEPP training in Cambodia

various religious bodies due to the influence of missionaries from diverse backgrounds. To bridge these gaps the youth leaders need deeper ecumenical understanding, and the training proved to be a brilliant opportunity for this encounter. In context of the rapid growth of Cambodian churches, a strengthened youth leadership is increasingly required. Since almost 30% of the entire population of Cambodia is less than 30 years, they can influence the communities in a great way. The training also addressed such themes as unity among churches, history of ecumenism and churches' work for community development.

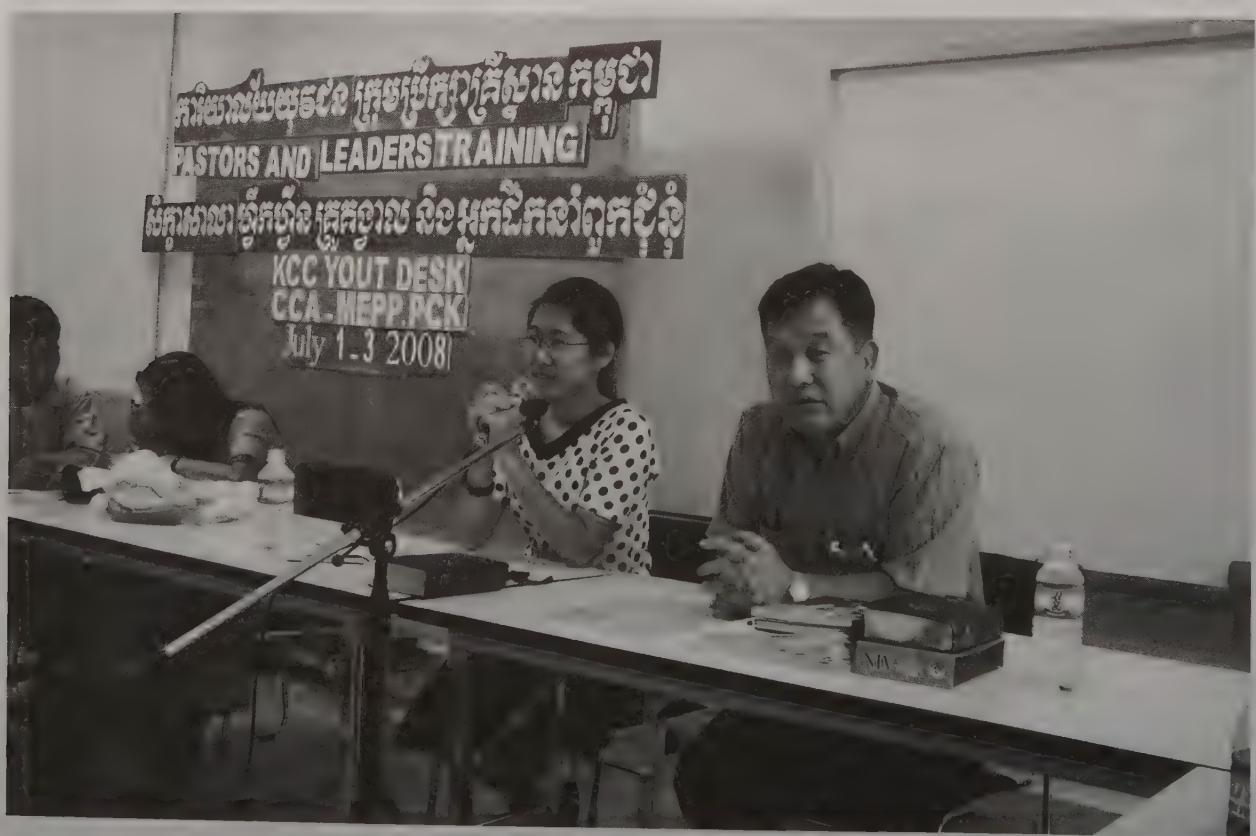
CCA-MEPP consultant Rev Huh Chun Jung led the training sessions and presented the theme in reference to Exodus 17:8-16. He reflected on following the leadership examples of Moses, Joshua and Aaron. He stressed that creativity and open mindedness, wisdom and pursuit of new knowledge is essential for young leaders. With courage and decisiveness, cooperative attitude and constant ef-

fort, young people can make a great difference to the communities around them.

In this leadership training program the resource persons comprised of Cambodian church leaders, members of Christian organisations and professors from Cambodian universities. They inspired the participants to analyse church and society from various perspectives and come up with alternative proposals. The lectures on Cambodian and Christian history enhanced the development of participants' understanding.

The participants expressed their appreciation for this opportunity and committed themselves to apply learnings from the training in their own churches. They also showed interest in continuing with such initiatives in context of the challenges faced by the Cambodian churches. Follow-up trainings of this program will take place in September and November 2008.

—Huh Chun Jung



Presbyterian Church of Korea's Commissioner for CCA-MEPP Rev. Huh-Chun Jung with KCC youth secretary Srey Sotheavy in Cambodia

# Struggles and challenges

Yueh-Wen LU shares experience of being caught between ecumenical ideals and impact of globalisation

**W**hat can Church do in a changing world and what is its significance in Asia today? This was a question I encountered many times when I worked with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches as its second executive secretary for Youth Concerns.

Asia is a lively continent blessed with diversity in terms of religion, languages, cultures, ethnicities and histories, and therefore it holds politically complex societies and communities. Due to such heterogeneous characteristics, Asian countries are facing numerous challenges, among which the most crucial is the impact of globalisation. One of the most affected segments of society, who face the repercussions of globalisation in their daily lives is youth.

I would like to mention my own example in this regard. I work for a business company that manufactures baby products. The company headquarters are located in Taiwan. It owns four factories in China, and US enterprises are among its biggest clients. I keep wondering to myself, "As an Asian Christian woman and youth leader influenced by the values of the East and West, what kind of change can I bring to this company that is only concerned about profits all the time?"

One time I went to Hong Kong to take part in a protest against unjust global economic systems strengthened by World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2005. There I was among friends, who came from all over the world, to challenge the unfair economic structures promoted by WTO. However, I could not stop thinking about a friend's view point that it would be better to save money and

give to the needy, rather than spending it on a protest. That friend of mine worked with WTO office in Geneva.

This is only one of the realities I encounter everyday. Like many of the young people, I struggle for my daily survival in terms of work performance, financial stability and opportunities for professional growth. However, it is hard for me not to pay attention to the world that I live in and seek "kindred spirits" among colleagues. Majority of the people around me considered WTO policies positive for economic growth and do not realise their adverse effects on the marginalised and disadvantaged communities.

Asian youth is faced with several challenges and frustrations. A lot of young people, including myself, try to cope with the conflict between ideals we believe in and the crucial realities. We live in a world, where a sense of acute competition exists among colleagues, classmates and even communities. Many times as young people we are forced to make choices that we do not want to make. We end up accepting the realities that we wanted to change and transform in the very beginning. We deal with problems related to differences based on religion, beliefs, culture, gender, age, power and social contexts surrounding every moment of our lives.

Youth has always played a crucial role in the ecumenical movement. However, several contradictions exist in today's church scenario. On one hand, we raise our concerns regarding social issues to bring awareness among people and, on other, the youth often gets tokenized. The youth voices unfortunately become a repeated rhetoric that we



Yueh-Wen LU is one of CCA's presidents and former executive secretary for Youth Concerns at the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. She had been involved with youth initiatives of World Council of Churches, and is member of Presbyterian Church in Taiwan. She currently works with a business company as product manager in Taipei, Taiwan.

hear in churches all the time, leadership does not give much needed support to the concerns of young people.

The leaders often tend to ignore that youth are the present and future of church. The church leaders also tend to sideline their own struggles while they were young. Therefore, this turns into a circle of deprivation that continues for years.

This brings back my thoughts to the initial question, "what can a church do?" and the answer is not a simple one. However, given that as human beings we all are part of God's creation, our ultimate concern as Christians urges us to find answer to this question.

Young people in Asia are affected by changing global, economic, political and social realities. We, as Asian youth, need to fight out the isolations and find positive solutions for our communities. This is the moment when a church needs to step in and reflect on these

dilemmas. The church needs to provide a platform for young people to find answers to the questions posed by the socio-political realities. I also had an experience of listening to the positive stories of youth from Asian countries who are struggling to resist social injustices and their churches became their best allies in the battle. This is the kind of role churches need to play in order to support youth in their struggles.

# Taboos

CCA Youth Consultant Adam Row reflects on how restraints on sex education impact young people in a negative way

**A**sia is one of the fastest growing and developing regions in the world. Technology is pushing new frontiers, and ideas. It is unfortunate however, that in tandem with this, societies caught between embracing future and holding onto the past left their members in the wake, unable to cope with new global values. Cases of sexual misconduct, teen-age pregnancy, rape, and sexual abuse are on a meteoric rise. The AIDS virus is spreading at an alarming rate. Despite the urgent nature of these issues, we have not undertaken any concrete strategies to resolve them, and they have grown to unmanageable proportions. A first step must be taken, and that first step is the implementation of sex education.

Currently there is no formal program to educate the young on sexual matters. It is frowned upon as a taboo and an undesirable topic by the majority of parents and educators alike. They turn a blind eye even though these are concerns that are pivotal in the lives of young people today. They are constantly bombarded by sex and sexuality in the media around them. It is a reality they are faced with everyday, which even the very young are not spared from. In trying to make sense of it all, young people are desperately seeking answers. The only avenues left to them unfortunately are sporadic, unfounded sources like their peers, and undesirable ones like pornography. They often end up with inaccurate information, warped values and attitudes; which eventually leads to bad decisions with dire consequences. Even worse are those who choose to completely ignore such matters, but become prime targets for sexual predators.

Knowledge is power, and this is the ultimate aim of sex education. It is about equipping young people with positive and correct beliefs about sex, relationships, intimacy, and

their own sexuality. It is about empowering them with the correct decision making abilities that will last them a lifetime. Lastly, it is about helping them protect themselves to a certain extent from abuse and exploitation. The only way this can be achieved is through a standardised form of education conducted by experienced professionals on such matters. It can no longer be left in the hands of the family unit, because as the current situation has shown, it has failed.

As mentioned before many of the social ills that are sexual in nature stem from just blatant ignorance and the ensuing misconduct that follows. Many teen pregnancies could have been avoided if parents have enlightened their children about birth control. In fact many of them would not have even ventured into sex if they understood the ramifications of their actions. It would help to foster a positive perception of sex and sexual matters. This would relieve the pressure which has been driving the increase in sex crimes. Also if there was a forum for youths to openly and honestly discuss their feelings and desires; there would be no need for them to whet their curiosity through un-retractable and illicit methods of trial and error.

Some argue that this responsibility should rest on the shoulders of parents only. However parents themselves may not have the correct information about sex, or may be unwilling or embarrassed to educate their children about the subject itself. They may not have needed such help when they were young, but the world and their children are born into has changed. Sending out their children into the world without at least a basic understanding of sexual matters would be like sending a soldier to war without weapons or armour. Some purport the notion that educating youth would only arouse their desire to engage in

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Sex education is frowned upon as a taboo and an undesirable topic by the majority of parents and educators

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sexual activities. To these critics I recommend that they take a good look around at the youth of today. They are already experimenting without a full understanding of their actions. It is similar to the notion of knowing that fire will burn, yet you plunge your hand into it. Those who are unaware of the effects of fire, if not taught, can only realise too late, that it can hurt them.

It is important to note however, that sex education is not the ultimate solution to all these problems. Neither is it a solution that will eradicate completely abuse and exploitation. It is merely presented as an effective method of greatly decreasing these occurrences. There is nothing to stop those who go ahead and engage in sexual acts despite knowing about the consequences. That is a decision that every youth has to make for his or herself, but we can at least make sure that it is

an informed decision. Even the most careful of precautions can sometimes fail in the face of a wily and determined sexual predator. However, there are so many cases of exploitation that could have been avoided if only the victim had been aware.

In truth, the pros of sex education far outweigh its cons. If our youth were informed and aware, they could have conduct themselves in a positive manner. The future is in their hands. Sex education will provide an avenue for them to develop strong decision making skills as well as healthy interpersonal relationships, but they need help to achieve this state. The solution is staring us in the face. We just need to reach out and grasp it.

—Adam Row

## CCA evaluation

CCA is going through an evaluation process as part of its journey towards the 13th General Assembly in 2010. The evaluation aims to make use of the organisation's 50 - years history to systematically analyse and evaluate its relevance, strengths, weaknesses and institutional capacity. Due to rapidly changing contexts of Asia and the challenges faced by member churches, councils and ecumenical partners, CCA General Committee recommended conducting an evaluation of CCA.

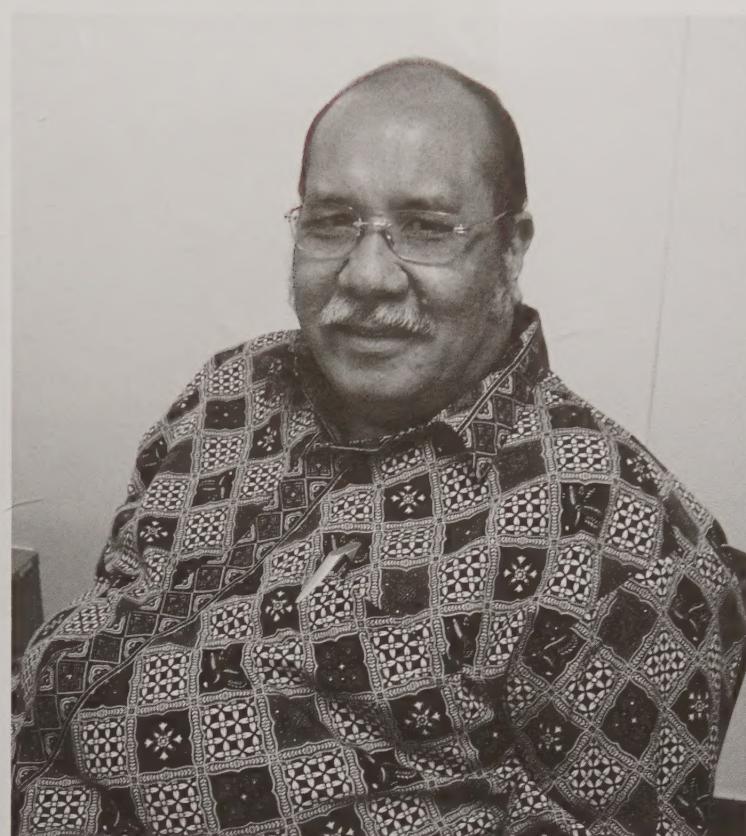
The evaluation team includes Leo Bashyam, Carlos R. Ocampo, Rev. Dr Hermen Shastri and Rev. Dr Henriette T. Hutabarat Lebang. The process includes assessing the institutional capacity of CCA as an ecumenical organisation and will identify key areas requiring changes in line with Asian contextual demands. Another task will be to assess CCA's relationship with its member churches and councils, and suggest ways to strengthen mutual cooperation. The evaluation will also identify challenges and possible directions for CCA in the coming years.

The methodology consists of interviews, focus group discussions, workshops, document reviews, group exercises and analysis. It is participatory and process-oriented with involvement of women and youth in all meetings.

The team recently visited Hong Kong, Korea, Myanmar, Indonesia and Thailand and will be visiting Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Indonesia. The team will also meet with representatives from World Council of Churches and ecumenical partners in Europe.

As part of the process, questionnaires had been distributed for CCA member churches, CCA General and Executive Committee members, ecumenical partners and the staff. The preliminary findings were presented at the General Committee meeting in Dhaka in September 2008. The draft report will be finalised by December 2008 and the next year will comprise of deliberations. The final recommendations will be presented at CCA's 13th General Assembly 2010 in Malaysia.

## JID staff retiring



CCA expresses gratitude to Tony Waworuntu for his eight years of service and contribution to the organisation. Tony served as joint executive secretary for Justice, International Affairs and Development and Service (JID) and coordinated many programs on human rights and security issues.

Tony comes from Indonesia and had been actively involved in the Asian ecumenical movement for years. CCA was able to benefit from his expertise in the field of human rights and international relations. Acknowledging his contribution for CCA, General Secretary Prawate Khid-arn said, "We at CCA are thankful for Tony's work for JID. His perspectives on human rights and security issues helped bring awareness to church communities in many ways. Through his programs he made concerns of Asian churches visible over human rights and international relations. We keep him in our prayers, while he continues his ecumenical journey."

## Praying for India



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CCA has been following the news about religious violence in India during the past few weeks. The anti-Christian violence which started in Orissa last month has now spread to other parts of the country. CCA has been in touch with Bishop Dhirendra Kumar Sahu, General Secretary of the NCCI, and received news of churches being burnt and Christians attacked in the state of Karnataka. The Catholic Bishop's Conference of India reported that over a dozen churches and prayer halls were attacked over the weekend.

This trend is especially worrisome as the acts of violence are being spread in states that are governed by the fundamentalist Hindu based party. In the information that CCA received, the state governments have been accused of inaction or being slow to respond. In the state of Orissa, over 50,000 Christians have been displaced and are unable to return home for fear of more acts of violence.

CCA strongly condemns any indiscriminate acts of violence against Christians and church property and call upon both the state and central governments to act decisively to stop such indiscriminate acts of violence by one section of the community against another. The CCA also welcomes the courageous response of the Christians and supporting communities in India.

The day of prayer and fasting launched by the Indian Church on 7 September 2008 as a response to the violence against Christians in India has been welcomed by tens of thousands of people. Instead of responding "to violence with violence", Christians have "fasted and prayed to overcome evil", leaving the ultimate judgment to God. All over India, Christians gathered in the churches or in open spaces to express their participation in the sufferings of their brothers and sisters in faith in Orissa. Members from all the religions participated in the celebration, with prayers and readings taken from the different sacred books of Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Sarnas (tribal religions), and Christians.

In his open letter to the churches, CCA's General Secretary Dr Prawate Khid-arn said, "In this age of pluralism, we would like to call upon all people, irrespective of race, culture and religious affiliations, to commit themselves to live in harmony with each other. Our world is big enough for everyone. In solidarity with our brothers and sisters in India, we would like to encourage all member churches and councils and ecumenical partners to pray for the churches in India and to write letters of support and encouragement to NCCI and member churches in India."

# General Conference of Methodist Church in Malaysia

The Methodist Church in Malaysia held its 9th Quadrennial Session of the General Conference at Kota Kinabalu from 15-20 September 2008. Around hundred delegates and staff from the six annual conferences of the Peninsula, Sabah and Sarawak gathered with guests and bishops from Singapore, Indonesia, UK, Australia and USA. During the conference, the current Bishop Dr Hwa Yung was re-elected for another term of four years. In his episcopal address the Bishop challenged and called the church to practice scriptural holiness and to transform the nation. The assembly also elected Anthony Row as new General Secretary for the term of four years. He is currently a member of CCA's General Committee, Executive Committee and Personnel Committee.

While deliberating on the mission of the church and its strategies for the next quadrennial, the conference expressed deep concern on issues plaguing the nation, calling for earnest prayer and considered action. The issues include economic and political uncer-

tainties; socio-ethnic polarisation and schisms; corruption in public and private sectors; reforms and independence of judiciary. The Methodist Church also aimed to address escalation of crimes and increased concerns on the integrity and dependability of law enforcement agencies. It expressed concern over land rights of indigenous peoples; unlawful arrests and detentions under the oppressive Internal Security Act; deterioration of education standards; exploitation of the poor, migrant workers, stateless, children and women and freedom of religion.

The Methodist Church reaffirmed its mission to "Spread Scriptural Holiness, Transforming the Nation" and reaffirmed its commitment to reach out to the needy and oppressed through social, medical and educational services. It also committed itself to uphold truth and justice; pray for peace and harmony; political stability and economic prosperity; poverty eradication and literacy advancement; and prevailing of righteousness among the nation.

## New vice-chairperson of WSCF



Janejinda Pawadee, Project Coordinator for Mekong Ecumenical Partnership Programme was elected as Vice-chairperson of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF). The elections were held in the WSCF 34th General Assembly that took place in Montreal, Canada from 1-9 August 2008. The General Assembly theme was "Your Daughters and Sons Shall Prophesy" (Joel 2:28). Janejinda will serve as Vice-chairperson from 2008-2012 together with Mr. Horacio Mesones from Uruguay, Chairperson, and Mr. Youhanna Kamal from Egypt, Honorary Treasurer.

# Prayer for peace

*Focus quietly inward on the message of PEACE*

*Begin with Peace for yourself*

*Imagine it surrounding you like a circle*

*Then expand that Peace to the surroundings around you*

*Continue expanding that circle outward toward the street you live on....  
from the little city your house is in (if it's a suburb), then expand it to  
the bigger city*

*Feel the connection of others....your circle of peace will eventually connect with someone you know*

*Share your peace with them*

*Continue the circle.....share your peace with all*

*Circle all....your country, your leaders.....all world leaders*

*Create a circle of peace around Asia*

*Create a circle of peace around*

*Each and every continent on our globe*

*Encircle our globe with peace*

*We are one mind*

*Our mind is a peaceful mind*

*We lay a blanket of PEACE*

*around our world for all to experience*

*May PEACE, LOVE and COMPASSION be will us all!*

*Blessed BE!*

*By Barbara Krecic*

*This poem was used as theme for Asia-Pacific Students and Youth Gathering (ASYG) on "Youth Across Boundaries, Redefining the Culture of Peace" held on 25-30 August 2008 in Yong In, Korea.*